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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1316
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RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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RUHBANB/OKINAWA FLD OFC US FORCES JAPAN CP BUTLER JA PRIORITY
RHMFIUU/USFJ PRIORITY
INFO RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5758
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 8154
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 4405
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6366
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 9425
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1359
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 2093
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7423
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 8064
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STATE FOR I/RF, PA/PR/FPC/W, IIP/G/EA, EAP/PD, R/MR,
EAP/J, EAP/P, PM;
USTR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
TREASURY FOR OASIA/IMI;
SECDEF FOR OASD/PA;
CP BUTLER OKINAWA FOR AREA FIELD OFFICE;
PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: TOKYO MEDIA REACTION - STATE OF UNION ADDRESS
AND GAZA

¶1. LEAD STORIES: Five of six national dailies gave top play to the ruling coalition's move to submit to the Diet stopgap legislation aimed at maintaining the gasoline tax at the current level beyond April.

¶2. "Bush Keen to Set Path toward Addressing Global Warming" Public broadcaster NHK's Washington correspondent Iida reported (1/29): "President Bush appeared to be more forthcoming than he was in previous years in dealing with global warming, as he vowed to exercise leadership in creating a post-Kyoto Protocol framework that would involve all major economies, including China and India.... White House officials admitted that it is not realistic for the administration to launch new policy initiatives in the President's final year in office. Thus, one of the main messages of his speech was to put forward a path toward addressing the global issue of climate change."

¶3. "Bush Prioritizes Economy" (1/29): Commercial broadcaster FNN's Washington-based writer Nishigaki commented (1/29): "The State of the Union Address by President Bush this year differed from previous ones in that the economy, not the war on terrorism, was his top policy priority, given the growing uncertainty over the U.S. economy.... His speech, however, lacked new policy initiatives. Additionally, as his popularity remains very low and as U.S. public attention is shifting to the race for the Democratic presidential nomination, President Bush is likely to end his term with much left unfinished."

¶4. "Bush Expresses Concern about Economy" The liberal Asahi wrote (1/29): "The address was dull in content except for some references to the President's leadership in dealing with the economy and the environment, as he is becoming a lame duck and the public is paying attention to the ongoing presidential race.... The President appears to have stressed the need for swift implementation of his economic stimulus package in order to express his determination to prevent the U.S. economy from further deteriorating."

¶5. "Breaking Impasse Appears Difficult" The liberal Mainichi's Washington correspondent report said (1/29): "President Bush showed concern about the current state of the U.S. economy and expressed his determination to prevent it from further slowing. It will be difficult, though, for the President to break the current impasse, as the effects of the planned tax cuts included in his stimulus package are unclear. His address focused on economic policy in light of the continuing chaos in the market... The President did not refer to the North Korean nuclear issue or to the need for that nation to democratize. Some observers believe that the President avoided mentioning the DPRK in order not to irritate Pyongyang."

¶6. "Settlement of Diplomatic Issues Distant" The moderate Yomiuri ran a correspondent report from Washington saying (1/29): "The President failed to put forward remedies to finish up his diplomatic tasks, as he did not refer to North Korea and failed to show a clear path toward the withdrawal of U.S. troops from

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Iraq in his State of the Union Address."

¶7. GAZA: "Put an End to Internment Camp" The liberal Mainichi editorialized (1/29): "It is wrong to regard Hamas as a terrorist group. It should, however, be held accountable for forcing Gaza residents into starvation and poverty. If Hamas maintains its militant line without compromising with either Israel or Fatah, the outlook for peace and stability will remain dim.... Construction of Israeli settlements on the West Bank continues. As the U.S. has customarily vetoed any UN Security Council motions critical of Israel, the idea is taking root that saying anything is pointless. If the settlement issue remains unaddressed, the Bush administration's goal of sealing a peace accord within 2008 will be unattainable.... In order to put an end to the tragedy in Gaza, which has been called an 'outdoor internment camp,' the international community needs to unite and use its good sense."

SCHIEFFER